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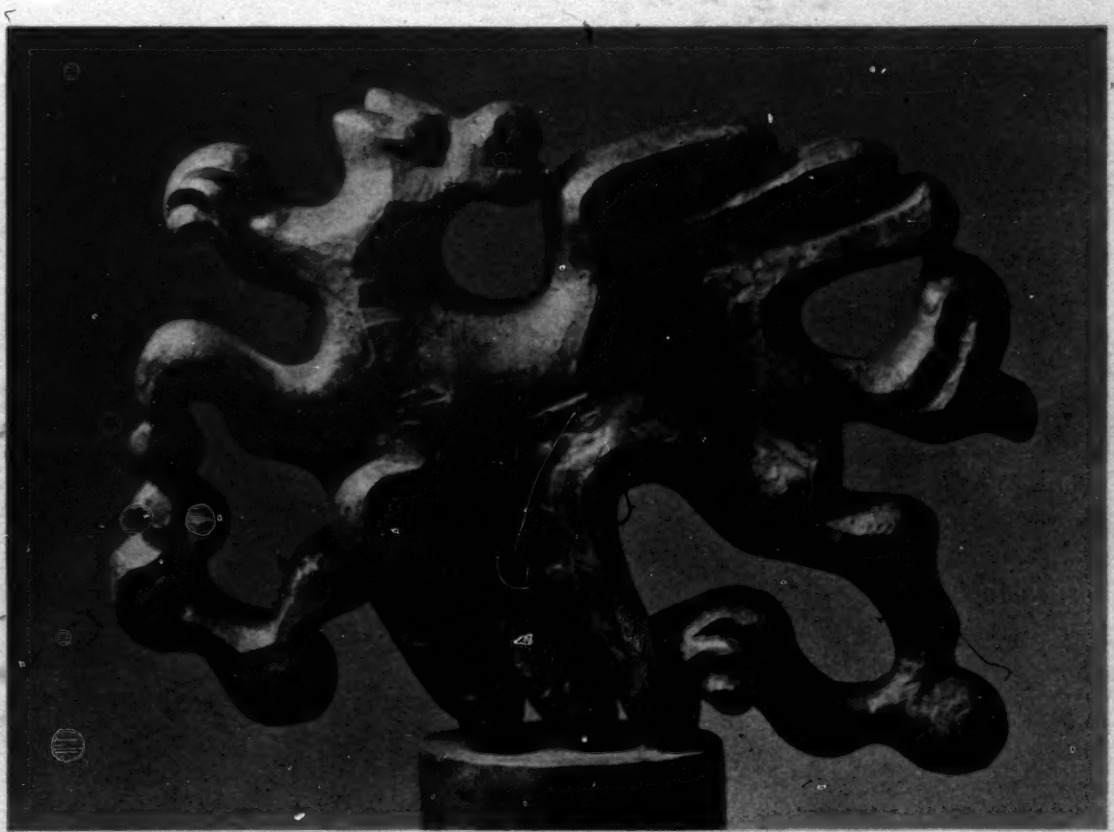

BUCHHOLZ GALLERY

CURT VALENTIN

32 EAST 57 STREET, NEW YORK

JACQUES LIPCHITZ

Early Stone Carvings and Recent Bronzes

MARCH 23—APRIL 17, 1948

Marsden Hartley
Letter to Jacques Lipchitz (1935)*

Monsieur:

. . . . . .

As I walk about in the rooms of the Brummer Gallery,** I am the more convinced that something like oracular converse is being held here. If I say that I am never too much moved by most sculpture,

* From *The Spangle of Existence* (unpublished).
** Exhibition Jacques Lipchitz, Brummer Gallery, New York 1935.

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Portrait of Marsden Hartley. 1942
[1877-1943]

my feeling among your sculpture is very different.

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

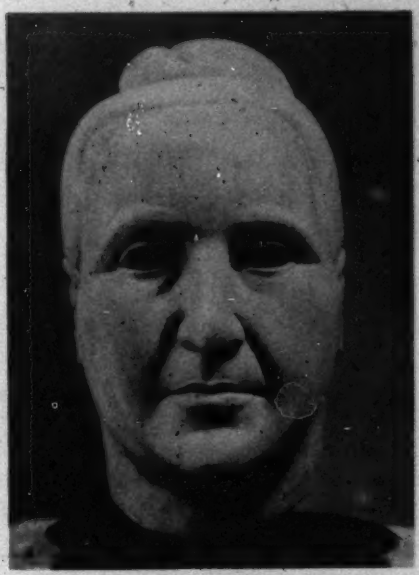
One can, in your case, dwell among the coils of twisted bronze traveling through folds of light and air, not writhing with nervous impetuousness, but seeking slowly yet surely to identify themselves with energies dynamic, as well as simple. Trees that press forward out of crevices far up on mountain faces, even like the clutching seaweeds that no storm can sunder from the rocks to which they cling with giantesque insistence, upon which many strong hands have clutched for last securities from death in moments of futile hope.

Arms that drive upward into the steel areas of the morning, no heaven having power to render impotent.

. . . . . .

Power spread aloft above one's head, the forms containing it, not shattering the will to believe in them, by any degree of irrelevant theatricality. Heroics of meteors that fall, sunder the earth in great splashes like waves crashing on a cliff, settling down to their innocuous grandeur despite the banal thoughts of human equation, no chariots of commonplace deductions driving across wide vistas to cheap delusion. No anaemic caryatids supporting preposterous facades.

A something like symphonic veracity pervades the richer forms of your motives, envelops and pervades these essays in relation, until it becomes a question, not where do these monuments belong, but how will they be understood by the daily mind that, contemplating, sees nothing at all but a formidable array of exasperatings designed primarily to disturb.



Portrait of Gertrude Stein. 1920
[1872-1947]

I am sorry you do not know the several meteors on which I have so often placed my hands here in America, as the holy or devout touch their hands to the fount of water blessed by some casual clergy—I touch my hand to them all, and I feel the pulse of the universe welcoming me ingratiatingly. I feel that here at least is something which has had stupendous experience, and is not abashed at being no longer eligible to endure that experience, no longer embarrassed that it can no longer return to those constellational highways where the vast business of the stars is so important —it remains poised in peace, and this is the comparison I should like to draw with the most stately examples of your sculpture:

They breathe of the pure essence of sculpture to me, infinitely more than that of some of the great recognized masters, and I think even Michelangelo is not immune from excess verbiage in the language of sculpture — it holds more of life in it for me, and I am thinking as I speak especially of the grand motive with the irrelevant title adhering to it, *Le Chant de voyelles* for Rimbaud's sonnet is not so vast, yet so much more impressive than the *Penseur* of Rodin, which is after all only a fine rough model sitting down, at so much the hour.

Relieving then, to come upon sculpture that is both, new, vital, calm, with that ability to "sit still" of the Egyptians, no matter what they did, a few beads of gold and stone on a necklace, the eloquent shape of an amphora, warmth without feverish sentimentality—we could be happy enough if even painting could for one moment maintain such poise in all areas at once, and how the modern masters have tried to accomplish this, notably Braque, the life everlasting of a

simple mood or idea, line, or plane in relation to the temporal world of our hectic unorganized energies.

Dr. Alexis Carrel states that the "cells that build up the body are capable of unlimited multiplication, and are potentially immortal."

Something like this takes place in a real work of art, and when it is perfected it seems plausible that its cells build up the body of its being as a work of art, that the life which has been put into it, keeps on adding to its richness, might go on multiplying its forces as we sleep through the night, and achieve immortality by the unalterable reality that envelops and inhabits them.

.....

All good art has something of this, and the more it has, the more it is likely to become real, and survive the sources of reality which change if they themselves do not perish, and this is what I find in your sculpture, Monsieur Lipchitz, even those pieces which I cannot personally relate to myself because pleasure is the first essential in experience with works of art, still remain themselves, entities aloof from either hatred or praise, and better still, of professional diffidence.

This loftiness which is intentional of course does not weigh the movements down with secular arrogance, they are formal with a singular informality.

What I am wanting to say is that certain boulders and I speak of superb displays of glacial pressure in my own native province, have been pushed there by that glacial pressure and left to enjoy or endure their isolation alone, but they are not left alone without some

sort of thought on the part of nature to leave them where they sit—right—so that posterity may always be aware of the enormous privilege of their beauty in the interval of the centuries, despite all seismic shudder, they have learned to sit still and breathe, like the fine works of art they are, they have not been fooled into performing decorations, they are immune from social command, which is their definition of pure character.

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Certain mountains, like certain tempests have apocalyptic appearance (and some look like casual nature).

Is it this very "apocalyptic" quality that I find in your sculpture, the thing that makes them move for me and have exceptional being?

I create my own fancies as you may expect in the presence of these sculptures which is as you know at once the gift and the stupidity of the spectator, and these provide me with symbols picturing the operation of night in relation to day and vice versa, they have the calm of the fallen meteor that goes on functioning in our own presence as a monumental thought cast aside to make room in the heavens for other action, forged into pure sculpture by the frigidity of the air, and the velocity of its descent, and one is not disturbed that it was once a brilliant orb of light shedding scintillance among other spheres, where light is the meaning and the substance of living.

. . . . . .

I therefore salute you, Monsieur Jacques Lipchitz, for this art of yours which satisfies, even comforts, because it is so genuine, because it speaks a lofty language, and because it is alive in the finer sense.

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CATALOGUE

Portraits

1 Gertrude Stein. 1920
Bronze. H. 8"

2 Marsden Hartley. 1942
Bronze. H. 22"

Carvings

3 Seated Bather. 1917
Pouillney stone. H. 27¼"

4 Seated Man. 1922
Brittany Granite. H. 20"

5 Musical Instruments. 1924
Belgian Granite. H. 20"

6 Seated Man. 1925-1928
Onyx. H. 15"

7 Guitar Player. 1925-1928
Cenosan stone. H. 23"

8 Reclining Nude with Guitar. 1928.
Basalt. H. 17"

Bronzes

1944

9 Pegasus
Study for the building of the museum of Yale University (Phillip Goodwin, architect)
H. 15½"

1947

10 Happiness (study)
H. 9½"

11 Happiness
H. 19½"

12 Miracle
H. 14¼"

13 Rescue II (study)
H. 6"

14 Rescue II (study)
H. 8"

15 Rescue II
H. 19½"

16 *Danseuse au Capuchon* (study)
H. 9"

17 *Danseuse au Capuchon*
H. 16"

18 Dancer with Drapery
H. 7½"

19 Dancer with Train
H. 9⅛"

20 Couple I
H. 5"

21 Couple II
H. 8"

22 Exodus 1947
H. 22"

23 Sacrifice (study)
H. 14"

24 Sacrifice I
H. 19½"

1948

25 Sacrifice II
Plaster for bronze
H. 53" (unfinished)

25a Notre Dame de Liesse
Study for the Madonna of the Church at Assy (Haute Savoie), France
Plaster H. 30"

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Drawings and Gouaches

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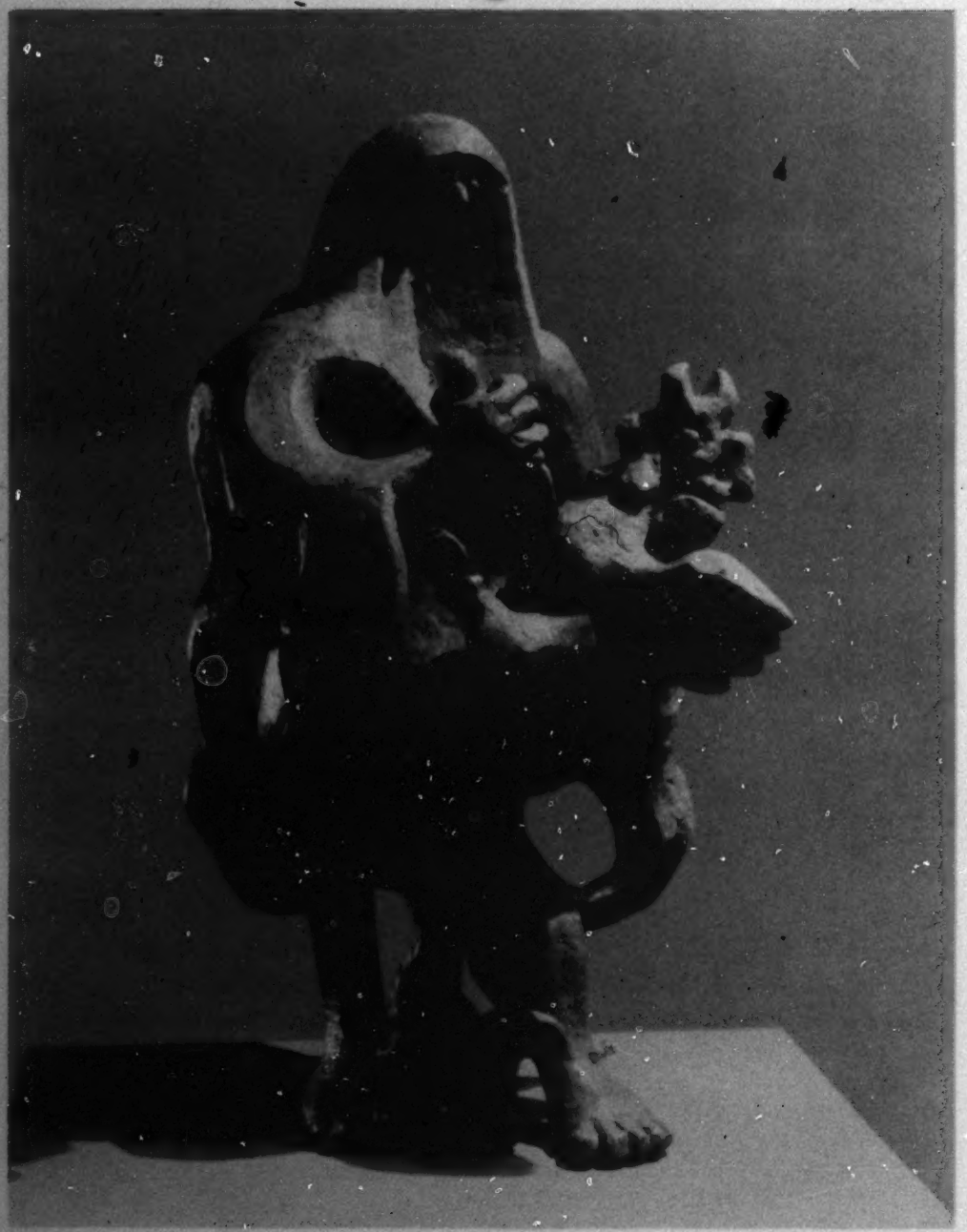

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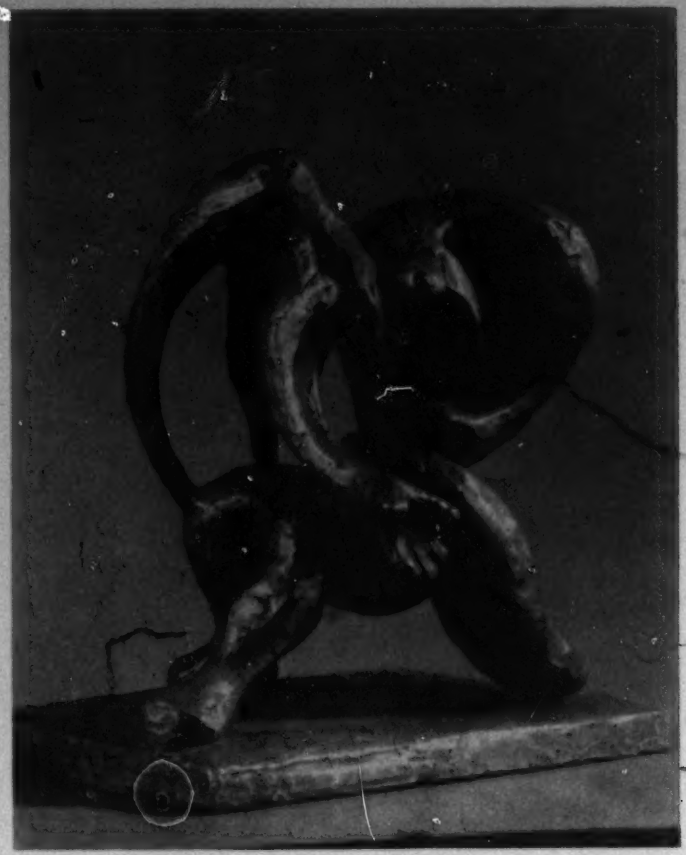

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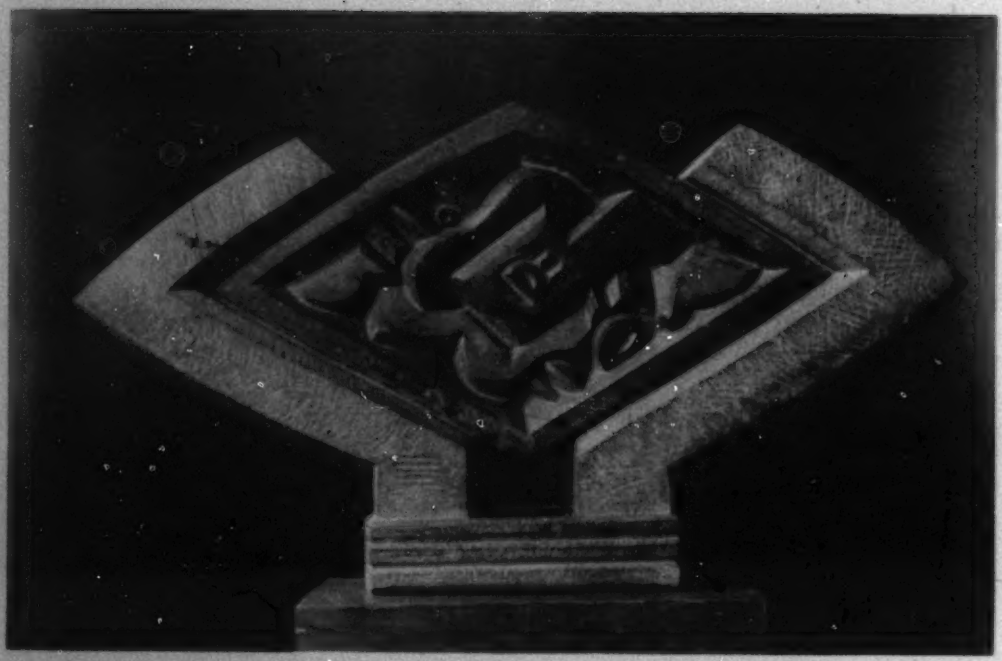

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